



**Written Testimony Submitted to the Joint Legislative Public Hearing on  
2024 Executive Budget Proposal: Topic Environmental**

February 7, 2024

The Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative is a coalition of community leaders and activists committed to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the development of a clean energy economy in our region and state. Our flagship program, the Ithaca 2030 District, seeks to enhance the energy and water performance of commercial buildings in downtown Ithaca and reduce their carbon footprint. We welcome this opportunity to express our whole-hearted support for the Climate, Jobs, and Justice. We think these legislative proposals are crucial to the implementation of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) and the Climate Action Council Final Scoping Plan.

**I. Climate, Jobs, and Justice Package**

The Climate, Jobs, and Justice Package, if approved by the State Legislature, will rapidly decarbonize New York, make the state healthier and more equitable, ensure a just transition for workers, and help create an accessible green economy for all. Overall, the bills individually and collectively advance the goals of the CLCPA. The Climate, Jobs, and Justice Package has three main components: 1) fully fund the CLCPA so that it can achieve its objectives; 2) build renewable energy for all and create green union jobs; and 3) hold polluters accountable and ensure everyone pays their fair share in taxes.

*1. Fully fund and implement New York's Climate Act*

- **The People's Climate Justice Budget** is a \$1 billion spending plan developed by and for New Yorkers. It outlines critical climate and environmental justice programs that New York must fund in 2024 as a downpayment on the more than \$10 billion a year the state estimates is necessary to address the crisis at scale. With the creation of the Climate Action Fund (CAF) in 2023, New York has a historic opportunity to fund projects across the state. This list of "shovel-ready" projects was compiled by the NY Renews coalition members and contains urgently needed projects in every part of the state.

*2. Build renewable energy for all and create good, green union jobs*

- **The NY HEAT (Home Energy Affordable Transition) Act** ((S2016-A/A4592-A, Krueger/Fahy) requires the Public Service Commission (PSC), together with NYSERDA, to initiate proceedings to develop a statewide plan to better align the PSC's regulation of utility services with the climate justice and GHG emission targets of the CLCPA. It eliminates subsidies for new gas hookups (the "100-foot rule"), enables neighborhood scale building decarbonization by eliminating the "obligation to serve" gas, and addresses operating costs by ensuring no household pays more than 6% of their income for energy. The plan will set biennial gas sales reduction targets for each gas company, and, with the possibility of exemptions, prohibit the construction of any new gas

plant that would result in gas becoming available in new geographic areas after September 30, 2023.

- **The Just Energy Transition Act** (S2935-C/A4866-C, Parker/Kelles) will help transition New York's most polluting fossil-fuel power plants into renewable energy hubs, creating jobs and improving air quality in environmental justice communities. The Just Energy Transition Act provides a plan to guide the replacement and redevelopment of at least 4 GW of New York State's fossil fuel facilities and sites by 2030. It lays out a clear, mandatory direction for moving forward with the transition off of fossil fuels per the Climate Act. Transitioning these facilities to renewable energy as soon as possible will hold climate and economic benefits and public health benefits, especially for environmental justice (EJ) and disadvantaged communities (DAC). Incorporating this bill will lay out a responsible process to achieve the commitments of the CLCPA by prioritizing a just transition that honors frontline communities.

### *3. Make polluters and the wealthiest New Yorkers pay what they owe*

- **The Climate Change Superfund Act** (S2129-A/A3351-A, Krueger/Dinowitz) makes the state's worst polluters, major oil companies, pay for the harm they've caused. It establishes the climate change adaptation cost recovery program, which would require companies that have contributed significantly to the buildup of greenhouse gases, the primary cause of climate change, to bear a share of the costs of infrastructure investments required to adapt to the impacts of climate change in New York State. These costs would be assessed against those companies responsible for the emission of greenhouse gases that exceed one billion tons during the covered period, December 1, 2000 through December 31, 2018. The program established in this legislation would assess the major fossil fuel emitters \$3 billion annually over the span of 25 years to offset the climate damages incurred by the state. Furthermore, the bill requires that an independent evaluation be conducted of the program.

## **II. The Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act**

We view the Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act (S3389/A7949, Krueger/Simons) as a companion bill to the Climate Superfund Act. New York shouldn't be providing huge subsidies to the fossil fuel industry, given the damage it is inflicting on the state. The Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act will end the most egregious state subsidies of over \$330 million each year to the fossil fuel industry, a major contributor to the climate crisis. It pinpoints and eliminates the worst handouts to polluters: incentives that support research and development within the fossil fuel industry, the use of highly polluting airline fuel and commercial shipping "bunker" fuel, and the operation of fracked gas infrastructure, among many others. The bill preserves tax exemptions that help low- to moderate-income households, including a home-heating credit and an agricultural exemption for small- to mid-sized farmers.

## **III. The Renewable Capitol Act**

The Renewable Capitol Act (S2689/A5633, Breslin/Fahy) mandates that several state facilities in downtown Albany, including the Empire State Plaza and the State Capitol building, receive their electric power, and heating and cooling from 100% renewable energy within three years, after a planning process with local community input. This bill follows a successful campaign by the Sheridan Hollow Alliance for Renewable Energy (SHARE) that stopped the state from building two gas fired turbines to meet state energy needs in Sheridan Hollow, an environmental justice neighborhood near the State

Capitol. This bill will compel the state to finish the job of protecting local residents from threats to their health due to fossil fuel combustion on the site, while addressing climate change.

The TCCPI coalition views the above measures as critical pieces in the effort to implement the CLCPA and Final Scoping Plan and urges the State Legislature to adopt them. Together they place equity and justice at the center of the effort to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet the climate targets stipulated in the CLCPA. Thank you.

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